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FirstLook

Power

IN-DEPTH PREVIEW!

SAINTS ROW

IV

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WELCOME TO
FirstLook

We've kind of gone a bit motorsport crazy in this month's issue of *FirstLook*, but the truth is it isn't entirely our fault. With Codemasters choosing to announce *F1 2013*, Polyphony Digital finally releasing a demo for *Gran Turismo 6* and Eutechnyx surprisingly bringing an exclusive edition of *NASCAR: The Game* to PC, really what is a free online magazine to do?

That isn't to say there isn't plenty to keep non-racing gamers amused this month, as we've penned our thoughts on the opening hours of what's sure to be the craziest open-world opus ever released, *Saints Row IV*, and we weigh up the pros and cons of *Diablo III*'s impending arrival on consoles. We also caught up with ArenaNet to discuss their ambitious fortnightly update strategy for the acclaimed MMORPG, *Guild Wars 2*. Adopting such a rigorous schedule would typically cause developers to shriek in terror, but the Seattle studio is made of sterner stuff.

Enjoy the issue.

Andy Griffiths, Editor
FIRSTLOOK@gamerzines.com

MEET THE TEAM

Still picking over some delectable pre-orders…

Andy Griffiths
Think its time to get a new wheel…

Don't miss!
This month's top highlights!

SAINTS ROW IV

F1 2013

GRAND THEFT AUTO V

GRAN TURISMO 6

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GUILD WARS 2: The game that keeps on giving

Why we should all be excited about DIABLO III coming to consoles

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SAINTS

IV

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DRAGON BALL Z: BATTLE OF Z

TIME TO GO GINYU!

For years, Namco Bandai's fighting series based on the celebrated anime *Dragon Ball Z* has largely stayed the same. Sure more fighters have made the roster, and visually the games look better than the actual show, but in gameplay terms proceedings have largely stayed the same since *Budokai* became *Budokai Tenkaichi* way back in 2005, transforming gameplay from 2D beat-'em-up to 3D fighter.

In 2013, that trend is well and truly bucked with *Battle of Z*. Yes it has a silly name, but it also has one powerful trump card: multiplayer.

In addition to the story-based single player mode, players will be able to take part in co-op and competitive battles with as many as four players teaming up to tackle a single foe, like Final Stage Frieza or Great Age Gohan, in addition to four-on-four competitive matches. Want to know if The Ginyu Force could handle Earth's Special Forces? Now you can, with your friends in tow. Series stalwarts Spike aren't behind *Battle of Z*, with *A-Train* makers Artdink taking over the helm, but we have high hopes that multiplayer can revive this series. ■

FirstLook

LEGO MARVEL SUPER HEROES

PUB: WARNER BROS.
DEV: TT GAMES
PLAT: PC, XBOX 360, PS3, WIIU, DS, 3DS, PSVITA
ETA: AUTUMN

TIME FOR A STAN LEE CAMEO!

Star Wars must be bricking itself. Yes George Lucas' universe may be where the LEGO videogame series came to prominence, but we suspect Marvel's ridiculous number of imaginative characters, settings and weaponry will allow this series to reclaim its former glory. With *LEGO Batman* and *LEGO Harry Potter* light on content and innovation, *LEGO Marvel Superheroes* is another chance for Traveller's Tales to strike new ground with their cute puzzle adventure series. The campaign follows an all-new original story with Thor, Captain America, Wolverine, Iron Man, Spider-Man, Hulk and other heroes taking down Loki and his own team of super villains.

Each hero has the sort of powers you'd expect, with Spider-Man able to spot invisible objects with his spidey senses, while Captain America can throw his trusty red, white and blue shield to embed in walls, creating a handy, dandy improvised platform. Iconic locations like LEGO Manhattan, Asteroid M, the X Mansion and Asgard also feature, but we're keeping our fingers crossed that Lady Death and Thanos make more than just an appearance. ∎

D4RK

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16 www.pegi.info

FirstLook

ALIEN RAGE

PUB: CITY INTERACTIVE
DEV: CI GAMES
PLAT: PC, XBOX 360, PS3
ETA: AUTUMN

AGGRESSIVELY OLD-SCHOOL

There's something thoroughly old-school about *Alien Rage*. It could be the brown and grey visuals, the non-descript armour-clad Marines or the emphasis on shooting aliens in the head but all that doesn't really matter. Sometimes gamers just feel the need to cause massive amounts of destruction against fleshy alien invaders, and thankfully CI Games' release offers exactly that. In the vein of *Serious Sam*, *Hard Reset* and *Duke Nukem* (you know, before that series turned poopy) *Alien Rage* simply focuses on the visceral joy of utilising elaborately designed, weaponry against a wide range of well-worn enemy archetypes like spiders, armoured warriors, flying drones, men with pointy wristblades, etc.

All in all, there's over 20 enemy types including 8 big boss beasts spread across 14 levels. For a downloadable Xbox Live/PSN release the visuals look very impressive, with guns boasting a load of different particle effects and combat seems fast-paced, with cover in place to help when enemy configurations get really challenging.

We don't know too much about the plot, but who really cares? This is a game where there's plenty of ghastly things to shoot at with pretty and satisfying guns, and at the end of the day that's all you really need to know. ■

SCORE
0066582

VORUS GENERATOR

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FirstLook

SAINTS ROW IV
Banned in Australia, beloved everywhere else

Despite having an Adult-Only rating for games, Australia's notoriously fussy ratings board is still banning games left and right for cultural insensivities which the rest of the world couldn't give a fig about. Unfortunately *Saints Row IV* is one such release and it wasn't the constant swearing, glorification of gangland culture or the return of the purple dildo bat that got the board's goat. Oh no, it was actually an 'Alien Anal Probe' weapon which could be inserted up a (clothed) enemy's rectum and then launch them into the atmosphere.

Funny? Yes. Puerile? Certainly, but the alien probe cultural touchstone isn't new, *South Park* did it in 1997 for goodness sake, but according to the Australian government the Southern Hemisphere would lose its mind, if this 'filth' ever made it to its stores. The term 'loosen up' has never been more appropriate.
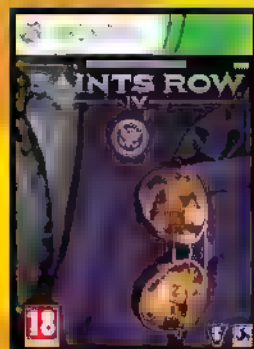
PUB: DEEP SILVER
DEV: VOLITION
PLAT: XBOX 360, PC, PLAYSTATON 3
ETA: 23RD AUGUST

XBOX ONE: DAY 1 EDITION
PUB/DEV: MICROSOFT
ETA: END OF 2013

The successor to the *Xbox 360* has had a big month. The head of Microsoft's gaming division Don Mattrick surprisingly jumped ship to join social game company Zynga, and Microsoft finally abandoned their DRM stance with regards to the *Xbox One*. Ownership will now be tied to a disc rather than a code and there's no need to 'phone home' to Microsoft's servers every 24 hours to play a game. Just like Sony then, really.

PLAYSTATION 4
PUB/DEV: SONY
ETA: END OF 2013

The jury is still out on which console will rule the next-gen roost, but this month Sony lost their E3 momentum. Microsoft's public abandoning of their anti-consumer, anti-trade-in stance diffused excitement for PS4 with many gamers now struggling to identify major differences between the two black consoles. It's your turn to step up to the plate Sony, game on!

BROTHERS: A TALE OF TWO SONS

Josef Fares' first game made a mighty impression on us when we saw it a couple of months back, and now we can finally confirm that *Brothers* will be part of Xbox Live's Summer of Arcade promotion. This cute fantasy story told from the perspective of two brothers is set to have a big impact when it's released next month. Play it!

FIFA 14

This year's edition of *FIFA* is getting a host of special editions and collector's editions in order to tempt football fans to put their pre-order pounds down early. Each edition is framed around *FIFA Ultimate Team*, the in-game collectible card game that has grown to define EA Sports recent releases. The tradition of swapping stickers in the playground has evolved.
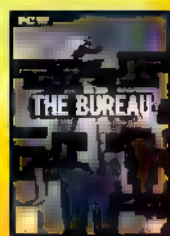
THE BUREAU: XCOM DECLASSIFIED

There's more than a little *Mass Effect* in *The Bureau: XCOM Declassified* with players able to give team-mates orders, in addition to shooting aliens themselves and unravelling a grand conspiracy, but that isn't necessarily a bad thing. 2K Marin has a history of making great games (see *BioShock 2*) and we think this release will surprise many come August.

PAYDAY 2

Tactical shooters like *Rainbow Six* and *SWAT 4* have disappeared from modern gaming, but efforts like *Payday 2* still do their multi-branching strategic legacy proud. Should you rob the bank from the north or south entry point? Is it possible to raid the safe without tripping the alarm? Shooting a gun is really only one part of a much grander plan.

PIKMIN 3

There's a part of us that still can't believe that *Pikmin 3* is finally coming out. The cute strategy series which features players marshalling up to 100 Pikmin around levels, recruiting new helpers and finding fruit has been teased for seemingly forever, but soon it'll actually be here! Bring a friend and order the leafy ones around together.

WHY WE SHOULD ALL BE EXCITED ABOUT...

DIABLO

...COMING TO CONSOLES

PUB

DEV

LAST GAME

PLATFORMS

ETA

REASON 1: LOCAL CO-OP

Sitting down to play **Diablo III** on consoles is a surprisingly surreal experience. The UI is different, the visuals have taken a slight hit, but after getting to grips with the controls, the true spirit of this formerly PC only title clicks into place. Those casual concessions we expected to find just simply weren't there. If anything the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 versions felt more attractive than their PC cousin, thanks to all the fussy design constraints being taken out. When Blizzard announced that local co-op/LAN play was cut from **Diablo III** on PC fans understandably lost their minds, as that method of multiplayer was the only way to sample the game in a low latency (less than 30ms) environment. Surprisingly the possibility of local play returns in the console versions of **Diablo III,** via drop-in/drop-out co-op. Four players can join a game at any time, with all character progress including loot and XP accumulation tied to a character's individual save.

REASON 2: NO REAL MONEY AUCTION HOUSE

Controversy number two for **Diablo III** was the real money auction house which artificially inflated the in-game economy and caused Legendary loot drops to become rarer than rare, as to not flood the online market with top tier weaponry. In fairness, Blizzard implemented this system to stop the blackmarket transactions taking place, but by getting involved themselves they gave **Diablo III** a resonance in the real world which many players resented, and of course readdressed the meaning of loot altogether. **Diablo III** on consoles solves that issue by having no auction house (real money or otherwise) at all. Players can still trade items between characters as long as they're in the same game, but it's only for other items.

REASON 3: NO BATTLE.NET

The console versions of **Diablo III** are completely cleansed of Blizzard's online framework known as Battle.net, with both Xbox 360 and PlayStation versions relying instead on each respective console manufacturer's existing framework regarding matchmaking, voice chat etc. The drawback of this decision is that Blizzard can't continually tweak game balance and issue patches, but the major plus point is that **Diablo III** can be played offline in perpetuity without having to phone home to servers, which is something even the PC version is lacking. We suspect Blizzard wouldn't have made this decision 12 months ago but times are a changing.

REASON 4: GAMEPAD CONTROLS MAKE SENSE

We cannot reiterate this enough, as playing **Diablo III** with a controller feels fantastic! The first thumbstick dictates movement, the second thumbstick controls dodge, the face buttons with the triggers control power selection and the left bumper is tied to potion use. All the important commands are there and the removal of the hotbar and ugly blue and red orbs (sorry, tradition fans) frees up more of the screen to be enjoyed. Loot can be sorted by using the D-pad and pressing down on the left thumbstick places a long identifier over your character's head for a moment, which is crucial in the heat of battle when the screen is full of enemies. Once gotten used to, gamepad controls are much more conducive to long play sessions than hunched over a computer desk. Sorry, but it's true!

REASON 5: IT'S STILL DIABLO III

*The biggest takeaway we had from our time with **Diablo III** is that this is absolutely the same game that was released on PC. Dungeons are still randomly generated, treasure goblins are still absolute gits to track as they aggro enemies, Nightmare mode will still cause premature hair loss and loot stats can still be gazed at endlessly in pursuit of that optimum build. This beloved RPG is heading to a whole new audience, with all the class tweaks and additional modes added since the 1.7 patch. Blizzard deserve a great deal of credit for bringing their successful sequel to console without changing what made it great.*

After our hands-on with **Diablo III** we were not only impressed with how this RPG's long-established control scheme had been mapped effectively to the controller, with minimal loss in response time, but also how Blizzard had adapted this sequel's trademark components to suit the couch-playing crowd. No Battle.net, no online all the time infrastructure and no economy irreversibly skewed by a real money auction house. These improvements are undoubtedly a result of Blizzard looking at the couch-residing audience and strategising what that subset, which aren't too different from the PC-owning crowd if we're being honest, want from a loot-driven experience. The result of this tinkering is *Diablo III* in its truest form, with the online-all-the-time constraint binned, bringing back local play in all its splendour.

Inevitably expansions will be coming to **Diablo III** down the line, both console and PC, and it's immensely valuable that Blizzard's undoubtedly talented devs have learnt lessons in adapting this addictive RPG to a new audience. Those lessons will help **Diablo III** in the years ahead and hopefully, if successful, the console version may inspire the PC team to add back in those features fans are crying out there. LAN anyone?

SAINTS ROW IV

HANDS-ON

Volition's certifiable open world series gets a

PC

SAINTS ROW

Saints Row: The Third surprised us in a massive way when it was released in 2011. It was the first time Volition's crazier than a bag of cats open-world series progressed from a *Grand Theft Auto* wannabe to an experience which had its own sense of identity, purpose and moral code… or lack of it. With giant purple dildo-shaped baseball bats, ridiculous yet brilliant wrestling moves, a Snark Attack Gun (yes, a cannon that causes a shark to eat the target, regardless of if they're standing in water or not), and a giant cat mobile which hoovers up pedestrians and shoots them out of a cannon, it would be fair to say that *The Third* didn't take itself too seriously, and therein lied its charm.

The Third was a power fantasy fever dream which screamed player choice and quick fulfilment. Propped up with lots of obscure pop culture references, ridiculous levels of casual violence, a wrestler voiced by Hulk Hogan and Burt Reynolds suitably enough playing himself as the Mayor

presidential makeover

of the city of Stee port. Simply put, we couldn't imagine how Volition could dial up the over-the-top nature of *Saints Row* any further, after all the last game involved taking down a city-sized aircraft carrier for its finale for goodness sake. How wrong we were. Voltion's latest doesn't just defy expectations, it kicks them square y in the nuts, making copious amounts of dick jokes and fi m references along the way.

Our spoiler-filled four hour hands-on session started with an ominous image of a suitably 'Saintified' empty thrown in a desolate misty room, with a suitably stiff upper-lipped narrator tell ng the player that the time for Saints to truly be tested as heroes has arrived. Wi l the 'puckish rogues' take their place as the protectors of America or shrink into their purple pimp suits?

We were scratching our heads while laughing in disbelief at this distinctly bizarre intro scene. With it slowly transitioning to a scene showing a helicopter blazing over ❯

Kinzie seems to get a lot more screen time in *Saints Row IV* than she did before

hot desert pumping out Little Richard's *Long Tall Sally* as it goes. Inside the aircraft we suddenly see the long-established members of the 3rd Street Saints Pearce and Shaundi kitted out in special forces outfits with S.A.I.N.T.S emblazoned in the place of S.W.A.T, flanked by an altogether British-sounding super agent named Asha Odekar. She stands next to the suitably helmeted player pre-character customisation, casually talking as if the player has any clue of what they're all doing in

the helicopter. But then this is how *Saints Row* has always rolled, not explaining itself in detail simply following its own tune instead of dancing merrily to those of others.

In the shooting department it seems *Saints Row IV* hasn't changed too much. Enemies still predictably stand in one place shooting away, occasionally running in close to get

> ## "Simply following its own tune instead of dancing merrily to those of others"

in some cheap melee hits, but for the most part gun combat has stayed the same. That isn't really the point of this sequel though, as proven by the next gameplay section. We continued into the terrorist base of the former head of STAG. Cyrus perked his head up telling the player that he's going to wipe the United States off the map via the launch of a warhead nuclear.

The Inflato Ray is sure to win a lot of fans. The Dubstep Gun still gets our vote for best weapon though

A brief wrestling move-laden QTE later and the former antagonist is defeated, but not without starting the launch sequence for his vengeance-packing warhead against the nation that wronged him so in the previous game. The Saints continue to battle through the base, when Pearce and Shaundi suddenly go their seperate ways, which leaves only the player character to ❯
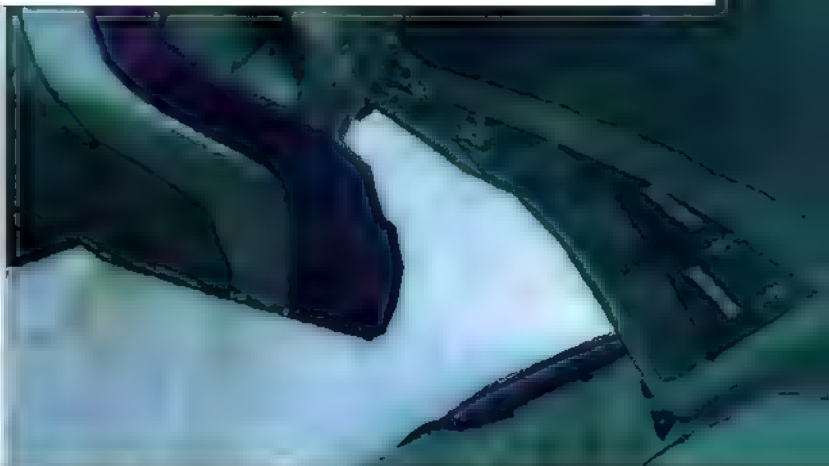
RIFLEMEN'S CREED

"This is my rifle, there are many others like it, but this one is mine." We think Gormer Pile would've liked his time playing *Saints Row IV*, as Volition has very kindly added weapon customisation to their extensive character and vehicle customisation suites. New skins can be applied to almost any weapon, like the rocket launcher which can be seen to the left. Options range from guitar cases to transparent casing, in addition to more minor details like adding new music to the Dubstep Gun. As in *Saints Row: The Third*, any created character can also be uploaded to Volition's network for players to share with their friends and vote upon. Play the way you see fit.

Enemies are still clumped together in Strongholds around the map These can be cleared to earn cache which can be spent to unlock new abilties

run to the missile head-on just as it's propelling itself into the cosmos. It's time to be a hero and the Saints leader, who happens to be you, steps in - leaping onto the Apollo 11-sized cylindrical rocket Mario-style. Shifting around the missile's exterior, narrowly avoiding falling debris and disabling the rocket by reaching into its

maintenance panels and pulling out anything that looks important. While all this is going on the other Saints are on the radio extolling their condolences regarding your imminent death punctuated by words like "hero", "love", "Pearce" and "asshole". And all the while Aerosmith's epic power ballad *I Don't Want to Miss a Thing* is pumping out

WARDENS

Zin's digital recreation of Steelport, dubbed 'Simulation 31' is not only staffed by police officers and aliens. Joining the diverse, class-based enemy ranks are special boss enemies known only as 'Wardens'. These enemies defend key parts of the city and share the same code-breaking super powers as the player. We suspect you'll only come across these fearsome warriors during missions, as there's only a handful of them in the city, but when you do you'll need to formulate a proper strategy. Avoid their ground pound attacks, stock up on powerful explosive-yielding weapons and stay nimble as these fellas can zap your health in a matter of moments.

Saints in space? Why of course

over the airwaves adding an additional layer of delightful absurdity to what is an already deeply embedded tongue-in-cheek experience.

The sequence ends with the player disarming the nuke moments before it hits the target, which leads

> ## "Saints Row has always played into that established 'power fantasy' game trope"

the protagonist to crash down into the White House, landing plumb in the President's oval office chair.

LANDING IN OFFICE
f we doubted that Volition could raise the silly stakes of this series after *Saints Row: The Third* we were thoroughly mistaken, and that's only the first 30 minutes of the game.

Without missing a beat the following post-mission rewards unlocked: 'The Admiration of America Unlocked', 'Presidency of the United States' unlocked followed by alerts stating that Benjamin Motherf*cking King is your chief of staff, Keith David is your Vice President and Pearce is, suitably enough, head of communications.

Saints Row has always played into the long-established power fantasy game trope, but here it's taken to the next level, and even though proceedings may sound silly on paper, we totally dug every step of it. The Saints have saved the cities of Stilwater and Steelport countless times so it's about time they got into politics! Hell, we'd vote for

"*A cutscene faded up on our blue teal President walking into the camera with his celebrity aides, West Wing style*"

> them, if only to enjoy the inevitable carnage that played out.

From there, *Saints Row*'s versatile character creator kicked in, allowing us to create a female version of former President Ronald Reagan or an overweight metallic teal skinned clone of Elvis. Our creation straddled both archetypes with Nolan North – seriously, the option is literally called 'Nolan North' – joining the voiced dialogue options with the option to tweak pitch from very slow to very fast in 20 different increments.

Volition did tease an additional voice option which replaces Zombie from the previous game, but they wouldn't be drawn on what that reveal was, and knowing their form it could literally be anything.

We spent at least 30 minutes tweaking our character, choosing just the right amount of eyeliner, fiddling around with the 'Sex Appeal'
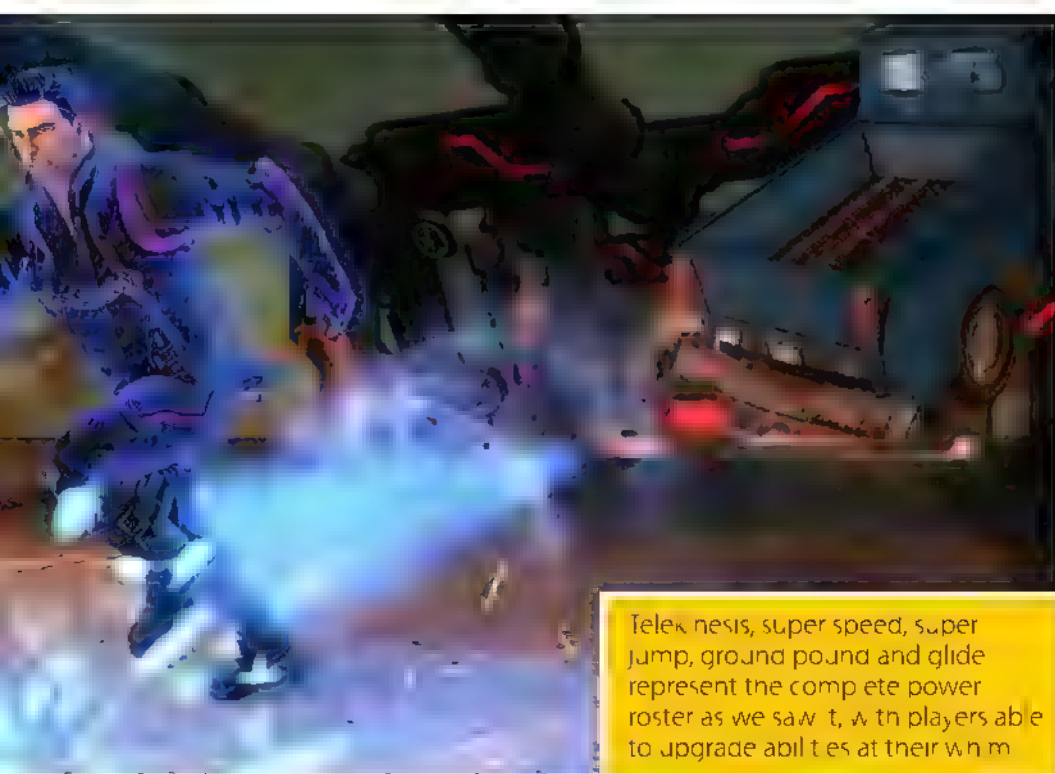
meter making sure the bulges looked as we wanted, and discovering a new emote option named 'Compliment'. Like the Taunt option in the previous two games, compliment is an additional emote option called upon by pressing a direction on the D-pad. Options

> "After spending, no joke, an hour fiddling with our character we were finally ready to start our adventures"

ranged from a Chorus Lady can-can action to The Amigo (huh-huh-huh-nuh) cowboy movement from *The Three Amigos* film. With 39 different options in total, including more call-outs to *The Matrix* than we thought possible, *Saints Row IV*'s character creator is as impressive as it is bizarre,

and any reference to *The Three Amigos* is a sign of a developer firing on all cylinders if you ask us.

After spending, no joke, an hour fiddling with our character we were finally ready to start our adventures in *Saints Row IV* proper, but the open-world game wasn't quite ready to unleash us into the freshly cyberfied version of Steelport quite yet.

A cutscene fades up on our blue teal President walking into the camera with his celebrity aides *West Wing* style, who happen to be rebutting him on his previous statement that the new President is so awesome that the pledge to America should be changed to 'One Nation under him', rather than God. It's a silly joke, like all the others *Saints Row IV* tends to throw at the player, but the dialogue and animations of all the major characters are carried out with such **›**
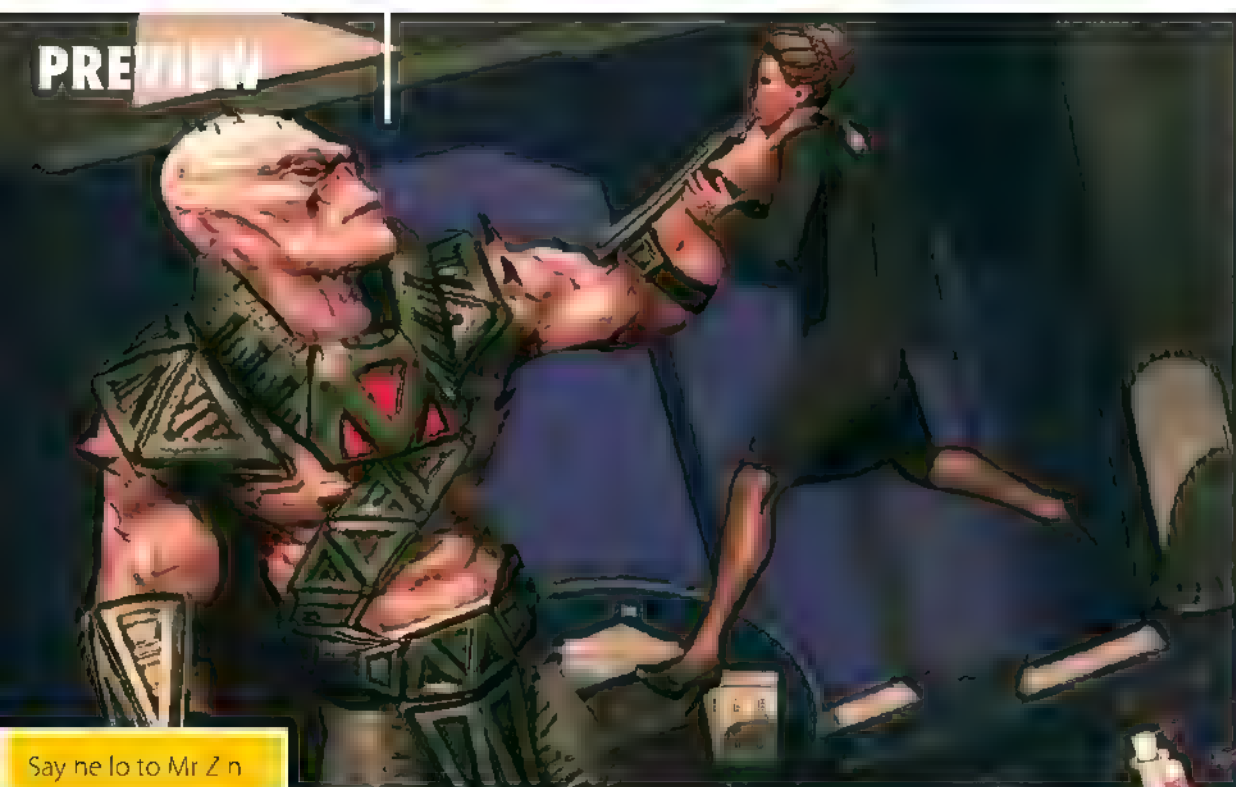
Say he lo to Mr Z n

commitment and joyous aplomb that it's impossible not to smile along with them.

As the world's most outgoing President progresses down the hall, multiple moral choices are chucked at the player ranging from Keith David asking whether it's best to solve world hunger or cure cancer (you can only choose one) to absconding to Camp David for the weekend to watch the latest episode of 'Nyteblade' with Josh Burke or not. Oh, and those two choices are separated by another 50/50 conundrum to either punch a republican senator in the balls or the head for using the term 'filibuster'.

INVADER ZIM

There's seemingly no challenge to the Saints once their charismatic leader becomes incumbent of the most powerful seat in the world, until at least their assured world

dominance is shattered by aliens suddenly blowing apart the White House, kidnapping all major personal and blowing up the President's favourite monument (guess what it is), before he gets up on a suitably stars and striped anti-aircraft gun to shoot invading alien ships down.

> ## "If Pinky and The Brain had a love-child it would be a lot like Emperor Zin"

In true *Saints* fashion the Commander-in-Chief then leaps head first into a fallen command ship only to be grabbed by the true antagonist of *Saints Row IV*, Emperor Zin. If Pinky and the Brain had a love child than he or she would be a lot like Emperor Zin. His opening line of

dialogue "What are you going to do, bravado me to death?" sums up his personality rather nicely. He doesn't understand humans, but his thespian accent and excellent grammar make him the perfect snooty antithesis to the Saints 'gangsta yet good' persona. After being beaten up by Zin, the thoroughly defeated player character is cast into a simulated version of Steelport run by Zin and his brute cronies – leaving the leader of the 3rd Street Saints and the rest of the gang trapped without any means of escape.

We've ruined a lot about the opening hour of *Saints Row IV*, but frankly it's the funniest and most unpredictable opening hour of any game we've played and post-capture this sequel takes an even more brilliantly bizarre turn. That transition between the real world and simulated one we won't ruin, but we will say that the instructions
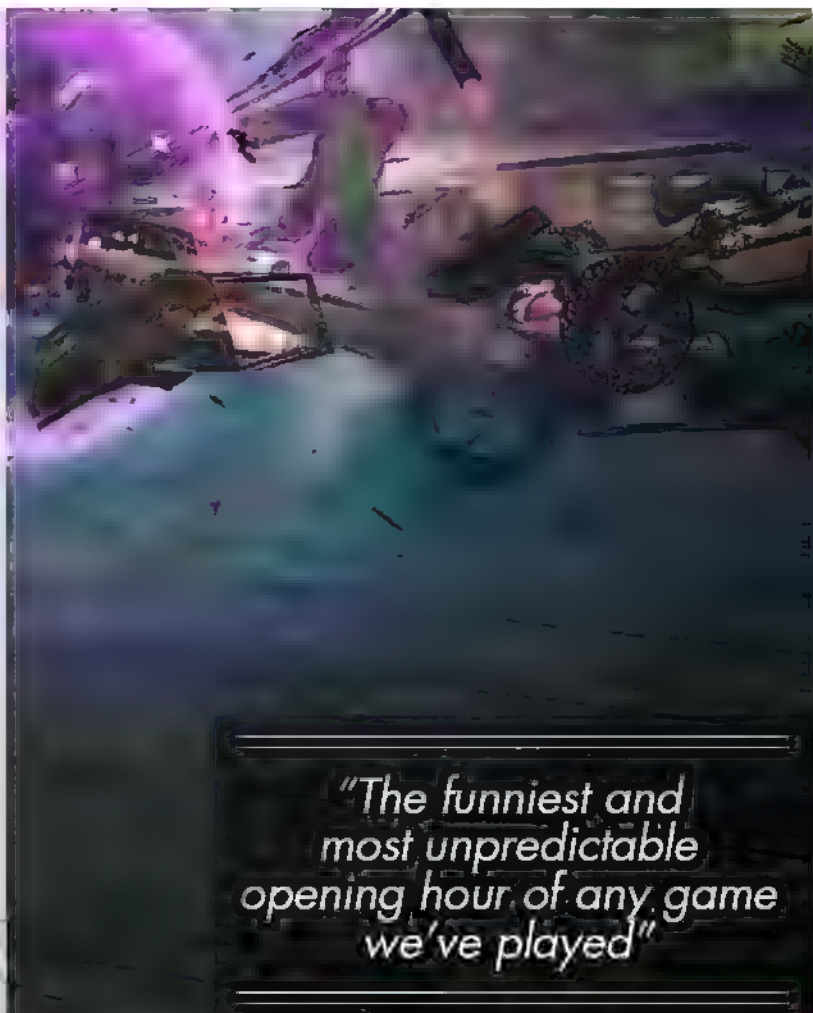
> "The funniest and most unpredictable opening hour of any game we've played"
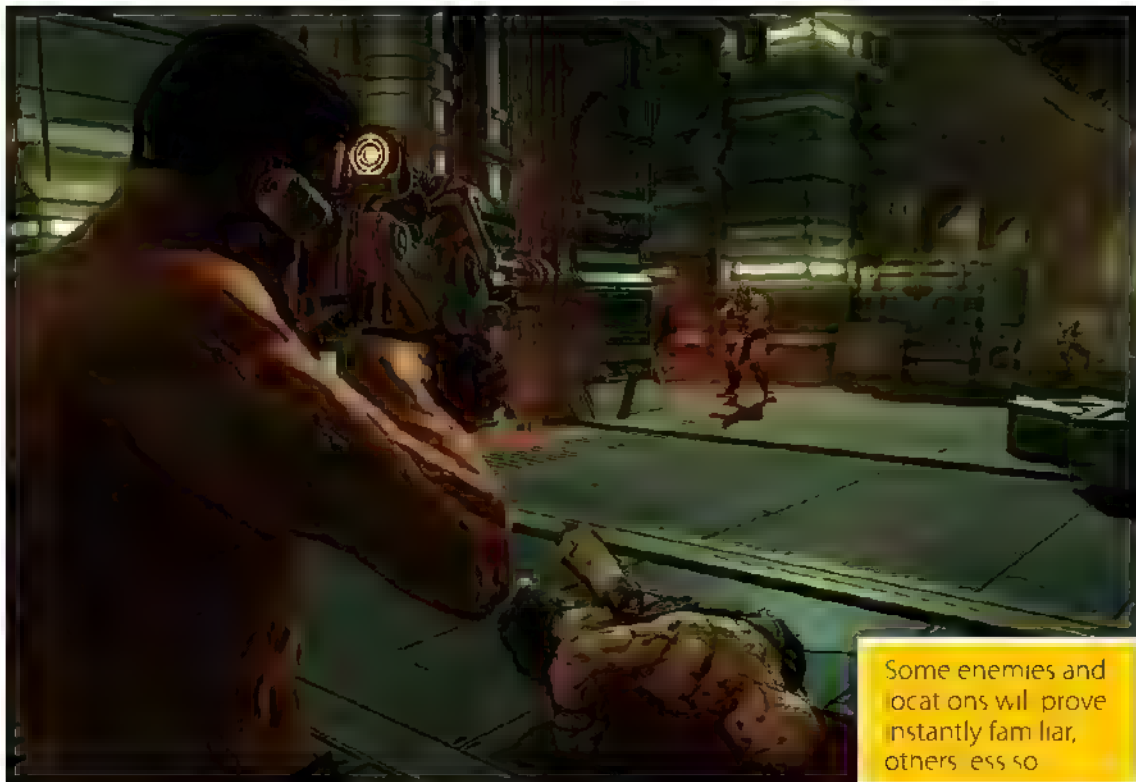
Some enemies and locations will prove instantly familiar, others less so

> 'accelerate cautiously' and 'brake for stop signs' does appear in a delightfully hilarious tutorial.

NEW GAMEPLAY, SAME CITY

After all these linear story sections were through, we were finally dropped in Zin's reimagined version of Steelport, and aside from altogether darker lighting and Zinified police possessing Enzo Ferrari lookalikes, kitted out in black and white liveries with the letter Z plastered over them, the Cyberpunk landscape largely resembled the same Steelport seen in the previous game. The three-island map structure is the same, as are the major landmarks, and this would be a let down if players weren't suddenly given super powers! Yes that's right, we said super powers, as in just Neo's from *The Matrix*. It's possible for the player to bend the rules of physics in this digital world by jumping multiple storeys into the air, setting fire to enemies, freezing enemies, moving objects with telekinesis and running so fast that even The Flash would be left in the

> "Leaping around the city and collecting these XP goblets proved immensely good fun"

player's dust. All these powers unlock sequentially as you supply the lovable hacker Kinzie, with rogue code elements scattered around the world, much like *Crackdown*'s Orbs.

Leaping around the city and collecting these XP goblets proves immensely good fun, and a nice palette cleanse from the breakneck

"Hi there Mr Alien, have you met Mr Mech before? He does a great ED 209 impression..."

pace of the campaign which constantly chucks unpredictable new scenarios at the player.

EXCELSIOR!

This *Matrix*-like framing of *Saints Row IV* is first class, as it dials up the stakes of the player's interaction with the world while maintaining the core components of this series, such as exploration, taking part in bizarre activities like Insurance Fraud and eliminating enemy strongholds. Weapon design remains just as bonkers as before as well, with players able to torment enemies and the innocent inhabitants of Steelport with creations like the Dubstep Gun, which causes anyone stuck in its radius to dance in a protracted fashion in accordance to some wub, wub, and the Black Hole Gun which creates a black hole in a ❯

Even when Earth is being invaded by aliens, there's still time for pancakes.

nearby area that sucks in everything around it before subsequently exploding. Despite the undoubted extravagance of these inclusions, we found that our love of guns pretty much went out of the window as soon as we discovered we could pick up enemies with our minds and chuck them off rooftops.

Volition has also gotten rid of the fiddly mobile phone and cash unlock interface, instead tying all menu options to the Select button allowing players to buy new abilities with cache data unlocked for completing missions and collecting the aforementioned orbs in the open world, which is earned by completing missions and collecting the aforementioned data orbs.

Another key improvement is the ability to jump right into missions from this sub-menu. Instead of having to drive across the city to take part in a new story mission you simply click the choice you want and you're instantly placed in the mission – no fuss, no muss.

> ## "The addition of super powers changes the core gameplay of this series exponentially"

After toying around in the open world some more our experience became a bit more predictable as we initiated two new side activities: a wave-based mode called Virus Injection where the player needs to protect a hacking point while Kinzie gets to work, and a refreshing twist on the Professor Genki FFA mode seen in the previous game, with the commentators exclaiming their

confusion about how and why the player has to chuck mascots, cars and hats into suitably themed floating hula hoops in order to earn points.

We continued to lark around in the open world for another hour by teasing police and Zin's occupying army, stealing their awesome angular hover tanks, and generally just causing mass carnage – as is mostly our want in open-world games.

After having our fill we jumped into yet another mission, which saw our overweight teal-coloured President awaken from his simulated slumber on an alien ship, puking up translucent orange gloop before meeting up with his gang-mates and escaping the ship in a sequence which had more than a little _Independence Day_ mixed with _Star Wars'_ Death Star Run about it. It was at that point our preview code experience was through, with a simple pop-up to thank us for playing – what a rush!

Judging from our time with _Saints Row IV,_ Volition has finally learned what fans really want from their signature open-world series. They don't want gangsters tripping about real world problems, they want them embracing the crazy world they live in with bizarre referential set-pieces and story turns which even the most experienced gamers will never see coming.

The addition of super powers changes the gameplay of this series exponentially, but at the same time that core Saints Row charm remains just as infectious.

Characters and set-pieces are so knowingly dumb that you can't help, but get swept up in the absurdity of it all. It takes real intelligence to be this silly without coming across played out or, and _Saints Row IV_ achieves that in effortless style. ∎
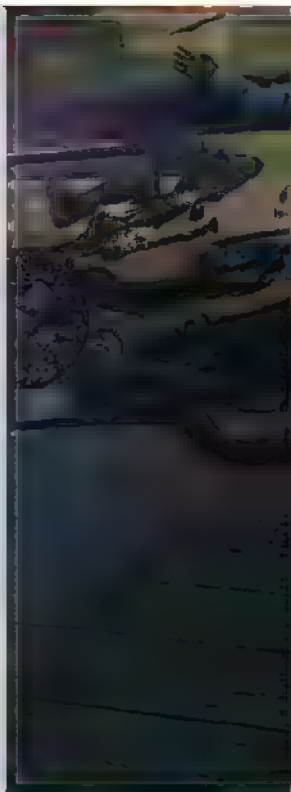
F1 2013

Let it never be said that Codemasters don't listen to fans when it comes to developing their beloved racing games. For years annoying Formula One aficionados such as ourselves have been banging on about historical content and how it fantastic it would be if Codemasters focused on the glory years of the world's most celebrated motorsport.

Bringing the championship back to the days when the likes of Senna, Prost, Berger and Mansel. fought it out for open-wheel dominance. A time when runoffs were replaced by gravel traps,

tyre performance wasn't the be all and end all, and when penalties weren't dealt out willy-nilly for the most minor indiscretion.

> *"Bringing the championship back to the days when the likes of Senna, Prost, Berger and Mansell fought it out for open-wheel dominance"*
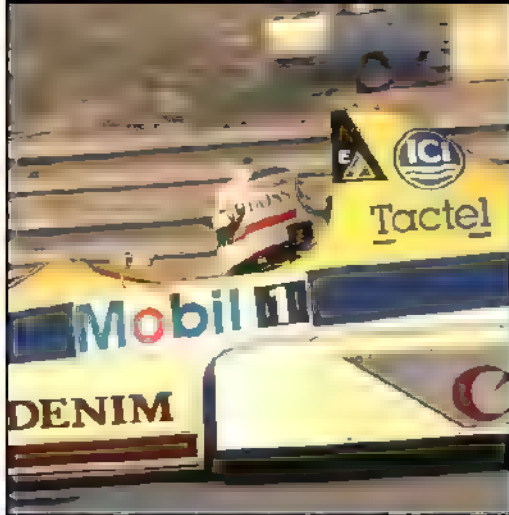
It's far too easy to romance about Formula One's golden days, and while *F1 2013* features

GAME DIRECTOR

Why did you decide to do historical content this year and not previous years? What was different about *F1 2013*'s development that allowed you time to get it in?

Well, to give you an idea of what kind of journey we had. We got the license in 2008 and started developing in 2009. We made a big decision not to do the 2009 game and that paid off in 2010 with the success of *F1 2010*. For *F1 2011* we solidified [what we had] by adding the safety car, then we had all the core components. Classics was on the roadmap from the beginning, but we couldn't deliver that until we got all the core components. It was a lot harder than we thought it was ever going to be because ownership [of different licenses] is often split [between different parties], so when you're trying to go after stuff, not only do you have to clear the car, you need to find somebody to speak to; you have to clear the sponsors. Some teams will clear those for you, but others you need to clear yourself. And then you need FOM (Formula One Management) to sign off on them, and then we had to include drivers who made sense, as obviously some drivers are sadly not with us.

Sounds like a minefield...

Could we have done a single car time trial [mode] in 2012? We could've delivered something, but as ever with us we don't release things until they're ready. I'm a big Formula One fan, so when you're designing a mode there are loads of things that go through your mind with Classics. I remember this moment or that one and I want to recreate it in-game, and that's something we want to do. There's some where you want to resonate an entire season, which means signing off all the cars, all the drivers, and what happens if a driver is no longer with us? Do you turn all the circuits back to their old layouts? That's a huge amount of work and [instead] you can take the approach that we took.

Not exclusively, but the majority of people who play the game are my sort of age, so eighties and ninties are going to be high up on their radar of eras they want to see in the game, which is what we've gone after as the first port of call. For us, while numerous other games will have classic Formula One cars, it was about the whole experience, and in particular tying up these legends. We've only announced a small portion of what's there, but when you look at what we've done with the visuals and car handling – and added to that there will be a double figure's worth of drivers, of which a decent proportion are big-name legends coming back. Some are the original drivers, but some are a driver who has won a race or a championship with

all the tracks, drivers, teams and liveries from this year's world championship, Codemasters are finally looking to cash in on that nostalgia with a new mode dedicated to emulating the sport's glory days during the eighties and nineties. How are they planning to do this you ask? Simple, a new Classics mode featuring cars and drivers from Williams, Ferrari and Lotus along with classic tracks no longer part of F1's Hermann Tilke-dominated calendar.

The build we sampled included one classic track in Jerez and five classic cars , the iconic yellow liveried Lotus 100T and several ➤

More classic car inclusions will be revealed closer to *F1 2013*'s launch

All these shots are from work in progress models, but they still look stunning!

Williams selections: Alan Jones' FW07b, the middling FW12, Mansell's iconic FW14B, and Damon Hill's driver world championship winning FW18. We could only sample a simple Time Attack mode to test each car's handling characteristics and speed, but each felt like an entirely different beast. The FW14B felt nimble, fast and grippy whereas the Lotus 100T could be flung into corners at speed are carefully manoeuvred out, if you didn't mind fighting against a bit of oversteer. Each car looked exactly as it should with tobacco advertising replaced with each respective team's logo, and each had a fully modelled cockpit view offering up new insights into just how

HOT LAP AROUND SILVERSTONE

that team or they've gone onto success with another team, but they're still a well-known name.

Of that legend wishlist, how many have you secured for *F1 2013*?
We're pretty close. Personally I would have liked to have gotten a couple more teams. We were close with two big teams who have won world championships. Already signing that double figure worth of drivers as well as all the sponsors, was more than enough for this game. When I first saw the full line-up, I looked at it and I thought wow. That was probably more than I was expecting we were going to do. We're not quite there with all of them yet though, but I'd love to say them all!

But then this is the first time that the series has featured historic content…
Exactly. It has been the plan for ages, that we'd love to do historic stuff year-on-year. You could offer different eras, scenarios or whatever. In some ways you could go to the community and ask them what they want to see next. The further back you go the harder it is, Formula One themselves only have the license properly from 1980/1981. Other than that it gets hugely complicated which is why *Forza* announced they've got a few teams, but that's pre-F1 license. Ours is all about the drivers and that experience, so yeah I'd very much like to see more in the future. I can't see any restrictions.

Formula One is rife with inter-team rivalry stories regarding team-mates taking telemetry away from each other and disobeying team orders etc. Is that an angle you'd like to see in a Codemasters' F1 game?
Basically, anyone who watches Formula One on a regular basis will be able to guess what kind of features are on our road-map for the future. Yes I think is the answer to your question, but we have to be careful about certain things like 'this driver is better than that driver', 'that car is better than that car'. They're comfortable that a Marussia car, performance wise, is less than a Ferrari, because everyone knows that, but in terms of displaying that in stats on-screen it becomes a little bit more of a political game then. You need to give everyone a series of strengths, rather than weaknesses. It's the same thing with character likenesses as well. We model them exactly like real life for reference, but the driver will say, "That's not me". Basically they're saying, "Can you airbrush out the wrinkles?" – they want the Hollywood look. FOM is very much the same. Our artists year-on-year want to model car panelling with rivets and dirt and grime, but these sponsors pay hundreds of millions

brave drivers needed to be way back when.

HISTORICAL RECORD
To fully recreate an authentic historical experience, Codemasters has also leant on classic F1 television tropes from the Eighties and Nineties with different replay music, an old-school aspect ratio and TV graphics to properly give a sense of nostalgia. Where the legendary drivers come into the Classic mode equation other than helmets and likenesses we have no idea but Mario Andretti, Nigel Mansell, Gerhard Berger, Jacques Villenueve, Alain Prost, David Coultard and Eddie Irvine have already been confirmed as appearing in *F1 2013*, along with introductions by legendary commentator Murray Walker, and there's at least four more drivers yet to be revealed.

When we asked if Damon Hill was in there we got a firm "No comment" from Game Director Paul Jeal, but we did spot a ❯

certain black helmet with white lines during a brief preview video.

There was no mention of Senna or if McLaren are involved, but fingers crossed Codemasters are saving those reveals for later on down the line. McLaren are heavily involved with *Forza Motorsport 5* and the free-to-play racer *SimRaceway*, so it would be odd if they passed up on being involved with *F1 2013*.

With 11 classic cars and four new iconic tracks, Imola, Estoril and Brands Hatch in addition to Jerez, it's inevitable that this mode will excite longtime F1 fans, especially with the option to pit these cars against one another in cross-generational races, custom championships and time trials. However it's a shame that such a critical component is being associated with what is essentially a pre-order scheme. If you pre-order *F1 2013*, you'll get the Classic Edition by default which boasts all this content, but if you wait until after the game's launch you'll have to purchase the content via DLC. That seems a bit strange and potentially confusing to gamers, especially as this content will draw fans in that previously may be have overlooked Codemasters *F1* series.

All this Classic mode talk doesn't mean that the rest of *F1 2013* has been neglected however. The core racing gameplay is being tweaked with
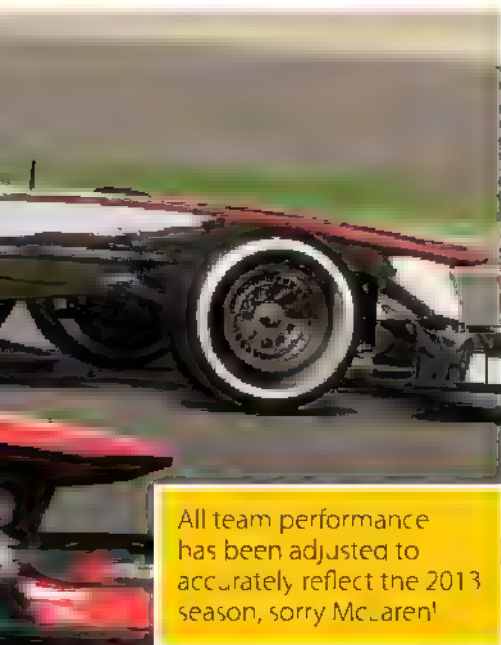
> *"All this Classic mode talk doesn't mean the rest of F1 2013 has been neglected"*

a new handling model and, if Codies Birmingham can finish it up, a new damage model allowing the briefest contact between cars to chip away end plates and wings as they would in real-life. A new co-op scenario mode also features with medals to be won, along with the ability

of dollars to get their name on the car. If someone was taking pictures of my house, I'd want the 'showhome' look, not what my actual bedroom looks like, so they aren't any different in that regard.

Team orders that you can ignore is a good one, not sharing data is another. The whole 'live the life' stuff that was in *F1 2010*, looking back we bit off more than could chew. We had to as *F1 2010* came out with a bang, but that meant that subsequently in a nine-month development turnaround we weren't really going to be able improve in every area of that. In terms of interacting with the race and dealing with your team and team boss perhaps – all of that is roadmap stuff for down the line. We're definitely relying on next-gen hardware [in that regard]. The garage is technically the area of the game which we're pushing to the max, where we render all of the cars, all of the garage crews, all the crowd, all the pit walls etc. In the wet in particular, when you go down that pit straight is when the framerate is the worst.

Codemasters' agreement with FOM for the Formula One license was based on the sport's previous Concorde agreement, which has since expired. Negotiations regarding a new agreement between the FIA, FOTA (Formula One Teams Association) and FOM are still ongoing. Is that a challenging situation for Codemasters?

We're used to challenges now with career new in '10, India in '11, Austin in '12, HRT are they in or out? Bahrain, is that in or out? That's all the challenges we've faced so far. We would obviously like it locked down earlier than it is. There's obviously millions of pounds at stake, so you can understand why they leave it as late as they do. We have to be agile and be on our toes. On my side we're the same as you, and Steve [Hood, *F1 2013*'s Creative Director] as well. My job is every day, I'm in all the F1 news, what's new etc. I love that bit, I'd be doing that if I was at Codemasters working on F1 or not – I'm an F1 fanatic. Every time there's a new bit of information, I ask myself can we get that in the game. I'm really hopeful for a January test.

Would that give you a chance to get the liveries, teams and drivers in there early?

Yeah exactly. If mid-season testing came back it would give us an opportunity to do a bit more narrative. What really works well in football games is that you've got different cup competitions, transfer windows, etc. – you've got all these moments to look forward to. Sometimes in a 19 or 20 race season it can be a bit of a slog. Hence that's why we have mid-season driver changes. I know that's very rare, but sometimes you need to give people stuff to go for. Yes there's the home races, the duel and the inter-team battle but really we need more peaks and troughs.

For more of this exclusive Interview, check out GamerZines.com

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All team performance has been adjusted to accurately reflect the 2013 season, sorry McLaren!

to save progress mid-session so you can tackle 100% race distance events either in the returning Grand Prix mode in single-player or online without endangering relationships/earning your daily bread.

Lots more information about *F1 2013* will be revealed soon, as the game's autumn release date looms ever closer, but there's one thing clear in our minds: Classic mode completely steals the show. Mods can only emulate these magical machines so far, but thanks to Codemasters these excellent race cars are getting a second life in the hands of gamers with all the visuals, handling nuance and sounds they featured in yesteryear. A return to F1's glory days indeed. ■

GRAN TURISMO 6

PREVIEW

PUB: [illegible]
DEV: POLYPHONY DIGITAL
LAST GAME: GRAN TURISMO 5
PLATFORM: PS3
ETA: [illegible]

A clash of car cultures

Turn 10 talk up a good game when they speak of their love for motorsport, but their *Forza* series rarely features the kind of eclectic creations you'd find in *Gran Turismo*. It's that love which drives Polyphony Digital's ambition, which is why they pick up on truly exciting automotive creations like Nissan's DeltaWing, which other racing game developers tend to overlook for whatever reason – be it money, drive or whatever. This kind of approach allows Polyphony to think outside the box with *Gran Turismo*'s design, like with their yearly *GT Academy* promotion to find a gamer with enough talent to make the transition from gaming to real-life motorsport, and an innocent-looking free demo on the PlayStation Network is the first step in that truly terrific contest.

This year, interest in that competition reached unprecedented levels as the free-to-download demo was based on still-in-development *Gran Turismo 6* code and the jump over the previous game was rather impressive. Only three cars (the purely electrical Nissan Leaf, 370Z and GT-R) featured on two real-world tracks (Suzuka and Silverstone), but it was easy to feel the leaps and bounds Polyphony Digital has made in their handling model. Suspension travel now feels much more reactive and spongy, especially on the slower cars like the Nissan Leaf and oversteer ▶

*"It's that love which drives
Polyphony Digital's ambition,
and it's the reason why they
pick up on truly exciting
automotive creations like
Nissan's DeltaWing"*

Despite only boasting 320 horsepower the DeltaWing is faster in a straight line than most P1 class cars. It's super light and has great turn in. In a word, it's a beast!

The world famous Goodwood Hill Climb will make its videogame debut in *Gran Turismo 6*. Sony are snapping up some very enticing licensed content.

moments feel more naturally produced, thanks to improved tyre temperature simulation. Players will now feel when they push tyres too far, with a real-time temperature gauge showing just how much that previous power slide cost the rubbery black things in terms of performance. That feeling was there in *Gran Turismo 5*, but here the way rubber interacts with tarmac just feels that much more impactful, with players able to feel weight shifting from the rear to the front and vice versa even when using a gamepad.

Due to our experience being strictly based on the *GT Academy* and that alone, it's hard to know how exactly these new simulation mechanics will behave in high performance cars like the Le Mans 24 hours-winning Audi R18 E-Tron Quattro or the aforementioned batmobile-wannabe the Deltawing, and we're very much looking forward to seeing how these handle in-game.

It isn't all trophies and

champagne for *Gran Turismo 6* though, at least in its *GT Academy* guise. Big technical strides have obviously being made, but troublingly they seem to be at the sacrifice of one of *Gran Turismo*'s most sacred principles: a commitment to a solid 60 frames-per-second framerate. During time trial segments around Silverstone

> ## "Shown off to others in a slightly less perverse recreation of Crufts"

the code performed admirably, but once AI cars joined us on the track some subtle frame skips entered the fray, and that wasn't even with a full 18-car grid.

Undoubtedly it's worth noting that the *GT Academy* demo is from a codebase that is still very much in development and Polyphony have lots more time to optimise

and tweak things, but still it's surprising to see the framerate prove so finicky.

Perhaps what excites us the most about *Gran Turismo 6* is that it's a game which takes chances. Visually it may not look a world away from its predecessor, and that's largely down to Polyphony sticking with the PlayStation 3, but in tone and execution it's clear feedback from the previous game has been listened to, with menu design now easier to navigate and load times lessened.

Polyphony Digital are charged and ready to take the best console racer title away from Turn 10's *Forza Motorsport*. The Japanese studio has always had the heart, but this time they may just have the game to back it up as well. We'll find out more soon. ■
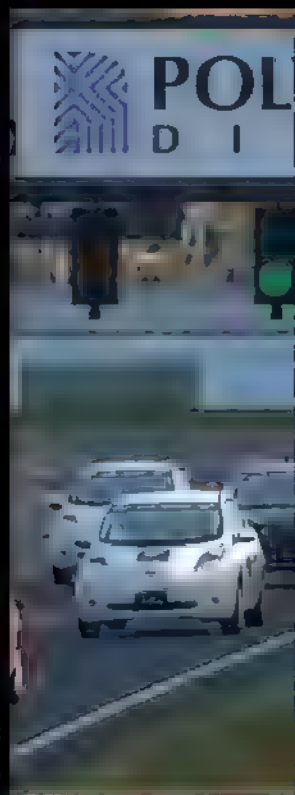
NASCAR THE GAME: 2013

EXCLUSIVE SHOTS

HANDS-ON

America's favourite racing series returns to PC

PUB
DEV
LAST GAME

PLATFORMS
ETA

Every NASCAR fan has heard quips about the simplicity of their favoured motor sport of choice… "How hard is it to turn left every lap? Why don't they turn right once in a while? Isn't NASCAR just a way to sell alcohol to hicks?" Yeah, we've heard them all before, but in the simulation stakes this sport is probably one of the hardest to do justice, as the margins between winning and losing on a track filled with 43 competitors is ridiculously small – be it judging fuel distance better than everyone else, taking two tyres rather than four during a pit stop

to earn good track position or simply managing to turn 400 laps without getting hit.

We suspect it's the scope of this momentous challenge which has prevented Eutechnyx from bringing their officially licensed series based on NASCAR to PC, as on the one hand the console versions are easier to develop for due to the restricted hardware demands and secondly *iRacing*, the sim produced by former *NASCAR Racing* maker and Papyrus co-founder David Kaemmer, pretty much has the sport wrapped up, albeit without all the official liveries

...C!

and drivers. Thankfully Eutechnyx has reconsidered that position, as this year they're bringing their take on NASCAR to the PC with all the benefits of two

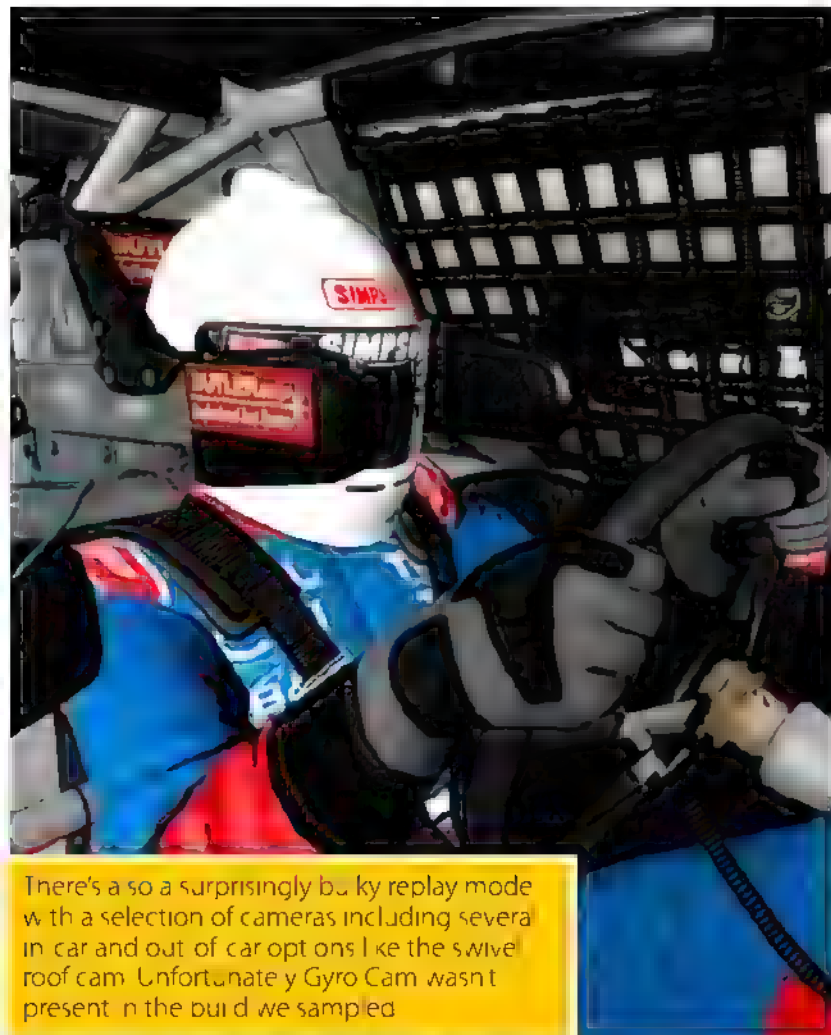> ## "In the simulation stakes, this sport is probably one of the hardest to do justice"

year's worth of iteration, and after sampling a recent Beta build we have to say we were rather impressed with their efforts.

NASCAR is known for being a sport which is almost too flashy for its own good and Eutechnyx has captured that essence perfectly with menus punctuated with trivia questions from the sport between loads and fancy video introductions to each circuit pre-race from legendary competitor now colour commentator Darrel Waltrip. There's a whole host of different real-life sponsors to choose from when changing your car's livery, as well as an elaborate number of templates to choose from, in addition to the option of importing car textures from the desktop. Some of ❯

There's also a surprisingly bulky replay mode with a selection of cameras including several in car and out of car options like the swivel roof cam. Unfortunately Gyro Cam wasn't present in the build we sampled

these touches do go too far, like a post-it note landing on a load screen promoting the latest phone from title sponsor Sprint, but the on-track action is good enough to excuse these sell out moments.

When running at top spec, NASCAR The Game: 2013 is beautiful. Menu textures look a little muddy at 1920x1080, but when there's a full grid racing around Indianapolis, Daytona and Watkins Glen, the visuals are simply a joy to behold.

Gameplay on the other hand is largely as you would expect, with close-quarter racing proving relatively stable, thanks to reliable yet forgiving AI. If you nudge them they aren't likely to retaliate unless you're on the racing line, and on some tracks they do ease off needlessly at times. Contact with cars doesn't result in aerodynamic-hindering damage as it would in real-life either, instead cars just clunk together limiting impactful damage to scrapes against with the wall. This

does mean that bump drafting is possible at the quicker speedways, but the AI never pushes you so far that you feel the need to take the risk, regardless which difficulty level is chosen.

At the higher end of the sim scale, *NASCAR: The Game 2013* does fall short, but Eutechnyx has absolutely nailed

> ## "An approximation of the sport it's based on rather than a pure sim"

the smaller details of the sport such as the importance of a good spotter. The race engineer is constantly chatting during races communicating surprisingly insightful and detailed information about competitors around you and race strategy with lines like; "The guy in front is killing our race, get past him" or "Your drafting buddy is behind" – all in a delightful

southern drawl. Aids like the nifty 360° car radar showing nearby competitors means you don't actually need this guy's advice, but these small audio touches help to sell the experience.

Despite introducing full flag and penalty simulation (for instance giving players a chance to yield positions if they overtake under the white line) yellow flag periods rarely occur without direct player intervention, but Eutecnnyx are still tweaking the code and improving the game all the time.

Like other officially licensed racers, *NASCAR The Game 2013* is an approximation of the sport it's based on rather than a pure sim, but in many ways we prefer it that way. NASCAR has always been a guilty pleasure, proving easy to watch and entertaining in equal measure, and finally the PC platform has a modern racer that can properly tap into that quirky fascination. ∎

GRAND THEFT AUTO V

NEW GAME, NEW RULES, NEW AREA TO EXPLORE

Despite actually showing very little of *Grand Theft Auto V* to either the press or fans, Rockstar are still playing a blinder when it comes to promoting their open-world sequel. They know gamers the world over are clamouring for any details they can get their claws on regarding vehicle inclusions, activities, story morsels, gameplay types and landmarks located in the refreshed state of San Andreas.

Sure, gamers have been there before in the suitably titled *GTA: San Andreas*, but the state seems to have gone through a dramatic transformation with players able to go scuba diving, take part in tennis matches, dust crops, take military super jets for a quick spin, hunt bounties and cycle against others in endurance events.

> *"The opportunity for Rockstar's trademark satire of Western life is ample here"*

All these tertiary activities are nowhere near as exciting as the game's branching tri-protagonist narrative, with players able to switch between Franklin, Michael and Trevor on the fly, both during

CATERING FOR CHOICE

missions and while just fooling around in the gameworld.

Whichever protagonists you aren't favouring at any given time will go about their lives and when you want to switch to one of them again, you'll usually catch them in the middle of one of their daily duties – be it talking with friends, hassling hoodlums or running from the police. The opportunity

for more of Rockstar's trademark satire of Western life is ample here and the ability to plan heist missions before you execute them is also a big plus. Most impressive of all, the gameplay footage shown above comes from the PS3 version of the game, so even though Rockstar aren't using next-gen hardware, *GTA V* is still set to look absolutely beautiful. ■

THE GAME THAT JUST KEEPS ON GIVING...

GUILD WARS 2

ARENANET EXPLAIN THEIR NEW FORTNIGHTLY 'LIVING WORL

GUILD WARS 2

PUB
DEV
LAST GAME
PLATFORMS

Lots of MMORPG makers promise that their experience will evolve every time a player logs on, but with content updates coming to online games usually every couple of months, that promise tends to ring hollow. *Guild Wars 2* is set to be the only exception to that rule, as ArenaNet is taking the unprecedented step of adding worthwhile new content to their MMORPG not once a month, not every three weeks, but every 14 days with new game modes, loot and story content.

Such a undertaking has never been attempted in a Western

MMORPG before, yet ArenaNet believe they're up to the task with 300 developers producing content for *Guild Wars 2* — that staff count is higher than before the game launched last year.

"It's interesting because it feels like we're launching [a new game] every two weeks, and so there's still that level of excitement when we jump in and see what's new," *Guild Wars 2's* Lead Content Designer Mike Zadorojny explained to us when we discussed ArenaNet's ambitious new update schedule with him.

"One of the things that we're

LD' UPDATE STRATEGY

always trying to do is think how can
we re-envision or innovate on the
core values of what it means to be an
MMO? If you look at the escalation
from launch, we launched the game
with Dynamic Events and now we're
looking at it and going 'Okay
Dynamic Events didn't offer enough
of a world-changing impact. We need
to do more.' Okay, what can we do
more? Well, how about this Living
World strategy,' he told us.

The Living World strategy isn't just
about the frequency of updates
however, it's an approach which
allows ArenaNet to respond quickly
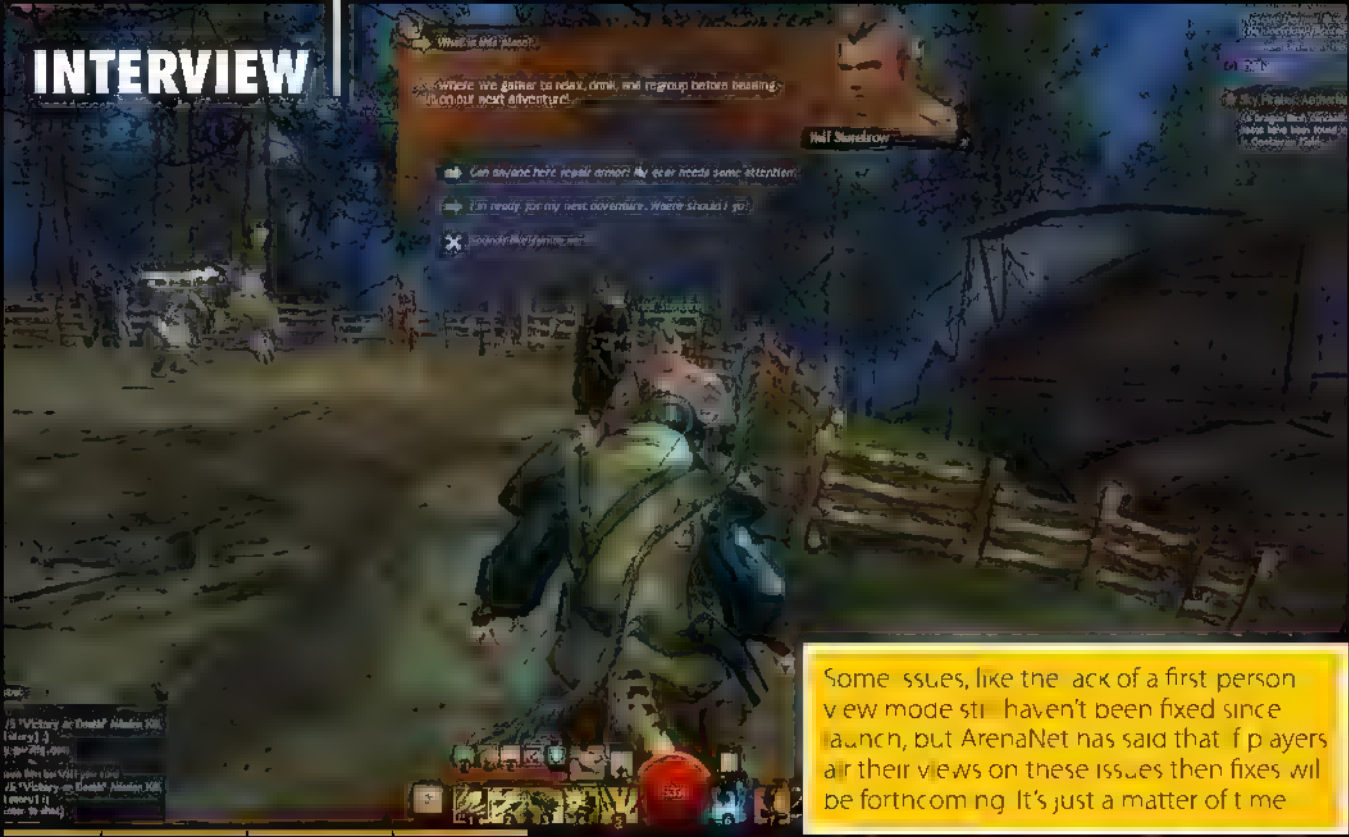
Some issues, like the lack of a first person view mode still haven't been fixed since launch, but ArenaNet has said that if players air their views on these issues then fixes will be forthcoming. It's just a matter of time

to fan-requested features like AoE [Area of Effect] looting and tangible gear and loot awards corresponding with in-game achievements, in addition to new game modes like the PvP-orientated Dragon Ball match type or new story content which not only apes what's already part of the *Guild Wars 2*'s central narrative, but also whatever the four content teams fancy lending their creative nouse to – like the film noir aesthetic seen in the recent *Sky Pirates of Tyria* update or even the 16-bit era inspired *Super Adventure Box*. *Guild Wars 2* is evolving and its direction, if ArenaNet can stick to this new strategy, should prove refreshingly unpredictable.

"We're trying to find new ways to push the boundaries of what it means to be *Guild Wars 2* and in a sense what it means to be an MMO"

"We think this is really special. If we can pull this off, every two week

builds, it's going to be phenomenal. Players are going to have a good time, there's going to be a lot of content and since we're listening to them and seeing how they are spending their time, we can adjust our strategy."

"Now we have four full 'Living World' teams that are building these content updates"

Keeping these updates fresh and original will be the ultimate test for ArenaNet but according to Mike they've built steps into their design approach to ensure the regular updates don't feel like a slog to either players or designers.

"It's a marathon not a sprint and we've been getting better with each of our releases, in terms of how we budget, how we plan it out, how we manage personnel, etc. Now we have four full 'Living World' teams that are building these content updates, so that we can stagger releases and make sure that people [developers] can decompress and get the quality time necessary to build a good design document before going back in and trying to implement it all over again," he told us.

The formula of these updates currently is unclear and unpredictable, but it seems a month's worth of content will be framed around a central theme, and that theme's content will be spread across two separate fortnightly updates. The

Most update features have included some kind of PvP content, such as a new arena or game mode
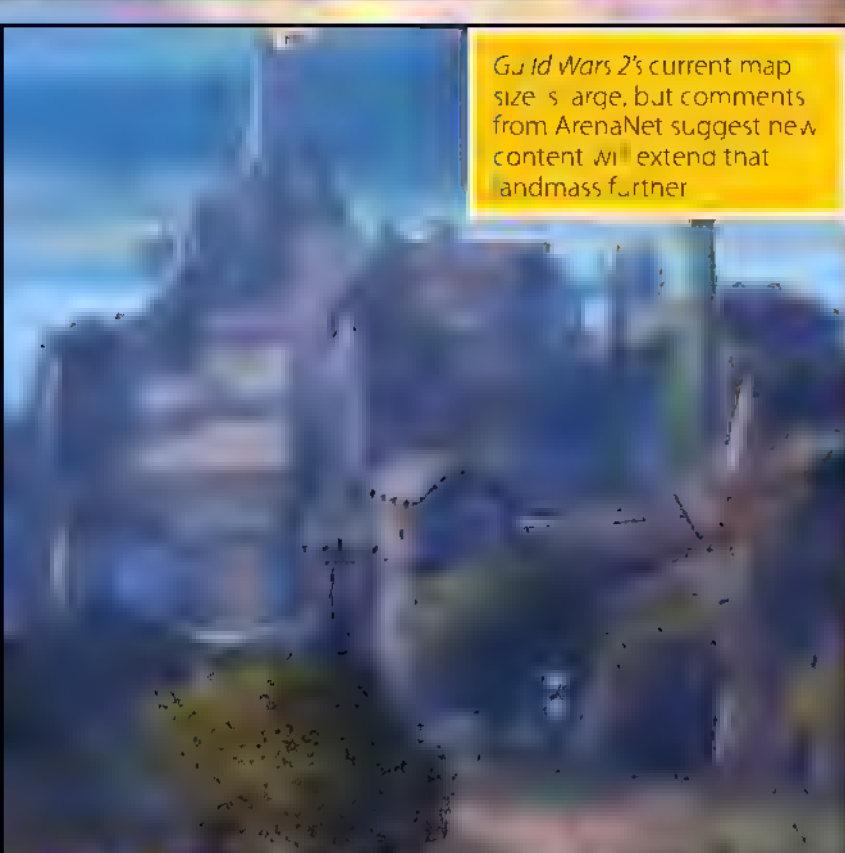
Guild Wars 2's current map size is large, but comments from ArenaNet suggest new content will extend that landmass further

majority of the content released is time sensitive, but balance tweaks and feature introductions, such as most recently Moa Racing in Lion's Arch and API integration to allow players to create third-party apps, will

"ArenaNet aren't asking for a subscription fee for all this new content"

be permanent, adding value to that initial one-time fee _Guild Wars 2_ players need to pay to get involved.

That's the really remarkable thing about this whole process. ArenaNet aren't asking for a subscription fee for all this new content, instead it's the

Sa es via the in game cash store are subs d s ng these free updates and, according to ArenaNet, items bought via the store br ng n a steady stream of re lab e ncome

gradual growth of the player base by gamers buying new copies and the steady use of the in-game gem store which is allowing the studio to introduce all this new content for free. They're actively combating the death of the subscription model for all but *WoW*, by allowing in-game store users to subsidise new content creation which more cash-strapped players, as well as those who use the store frequently, can enjoy. And this method is clearly working as ArenaNet can keep 300 developers deployed on the game.

While the future of *Guild Wars 2* on PC knows no bounds, the potential of the sequel appearing on consoles looks unlikely, as this two-week update culture flies in the face of

The Sky Pirates of Tyria update added a new faction to battle and, most surprising of all, airships

the closed off nature of certification Microsoft and Sony adopt, but even then Mike wasn't willing to take the possibility off the table: "I would never rule anything out because we're an insanely creative and fanatical group of people."

That statement not only sums up ArenaNet as a whole but also their

"This MMORPG is going to grow, not only in content but popularity as well"

stance towards Guild Wars 2. This MMORPG is going to grow, not only in content but popularity as well.

What's next for Guild Wars 2? Understandably Mike wouldn't tell us but he did offer up a tantalising tease: "There are many stories for us

The Dragon Bash update saw a giant holographic dragon haunting the pirate capital Lion's Arch, along with a special fireworks celebration

Items purchased from the in game real cash gem store can now be gifted to other players, including mini pets

still to tell in this game, and I would absolutely love to go back and revisit all those locations [from *Guild Wars*]." I have super fond memories of Elona, I have super fond memories of Cantha and there's some really cool things in Northern Shiverpeaks. Jormag is still up there, so I would not rule out anything at this point."

"There are stories to tell and I think the one nice thing about being able to do a Living World strategy is that it leaves those doors open. We can go explore those things, we can add some permanent content down there

for people to explore and see all those crazy things. Nothing is off the table and this just opens the door and makes it easier for us to do it."

Even if you don't personally care for *Guild Wars 2* as an MMORPG, it's impossible not to admire ArenaNet for the effort they put into their game and no doubt many other studios will be looking on with intrigue, tracking whether the studio can pull off their grand Living World strategy and if it changes player expectations as a result. The MMO genre is about to get a lot more interesting. ■
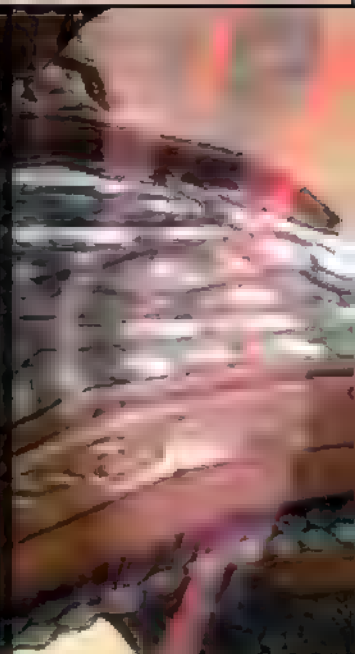
Upcoming DLC & UGC

Auto Club Revolution: AI

DLC

PUB: Eutechnyx
DEV: In-house
Out Now

A number of issues back we dedicated an entire feature to the future of the free-to-play racer *Auto Club Revolution*, teasing new content updates, track selections and a massive collaboration with a major motorsport partner. Unfortunately that last revelation is still under wraps, but over the past month *ACR* did get a substantial update with the introduction of AI. Now when players log-in they're met not only with the option to race others and take part in time trials, but they can also initiate races against AI. This is just step one in an ongoing process to add more AI content, including a career mode and standalone championships. Eutechnyx snuck in a sneaky glimpse of Brands Hatch into the announce trailer as well. ■

Defiance: Join The Show

DLC

PUB: Trion Worlds
DEV: In-house
Runs until July 30th

C ontinuing the cross-promotional potential between *Defiance* the game and *Defiance* the TV series, Trion Worlds and Syfy are once again teaming up to offer players an opportunity to get their in-game avatar onto the small screen for one special future episode. The contest involves harvesting as many arks as possible in the game's open-world before the end of July. The top 10 harvesters will then be given detailed back stories by the show's writers and then become part of a Facebook vote to determine the top five. Once they've been voted on by the public, Syfy's elite team of writers will again step in to determine a winner. *Defiance* has just been funded for another season, so expect this kind of contest to come up again. ■

SEASON 2 WANTS YOU!
PLAY YOUR WAY INTO THE NEXT SEASON OF THE DEFIANCE TV SHOW!

PLAY THE GAME. JOIN THE SHOW.
CONTEST

Super Skyrim Bros

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim continues to be a hive of modding activity, with *Ironman*, *Cars* and wrestling-garbed dragons making their way to the frigid ice realm. *Super Skyrim Bros.* follows a different tact though, transporting players to the realm of Mario, via an abandoned house, with talking toadstools, mushroom power-ups, koopas, Wario, Yoshi, and of course Princess Peach once again in the clutches of Bowser. Now this mod creator hasn't obtained clearance from Nintendo to use their characters, setting or indeed gameplay tropes, but frankly who

cares? This new 16-bit kingdom is only accessible when you sleep in a bed located in a special village, so you can enjoy a quick visit, mess about chasing goombas, and then get on with exploring the rest of Skyrim at your leisure! ■

Half-Life 2: Lost Squad

Every month we've featured at least one mod in this magazine associated with Valve's *Half-Life* series, be it beautifying the original game or filling in the blanks the
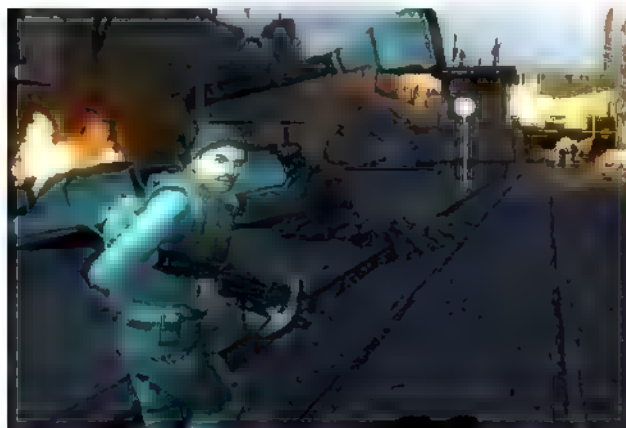
Seattle studio seemingly can't be bothered to do themselves. Well, unsurprisingly we have another one for you this month, only this one centres on luckless Black Mesa guard Barney Calhoun as he seeks to escape City 17 after the events of *Half-Life 2*.

The code for this mod is based on *Alien Swarm* and its creators have released 20 minutes worth of pre-Alpha footage to whet gamers' appetites. There's some nice camera work to be seen and the dialogue seems well done – they need a new English speaking impersonator of Barney to faithfully put across the character, but aside from that slight issue we have high hopes this mod will prove entertaining. ■

GRID 2: Drift Pack

While *GRID 2* wasn't quite what we were hoping for, we've still gone back to Codemasters' racer time and time again post-launch. Not for the career mode, but for the game's significantly padded out persistent multiplayer component which boasts around half-a-dozen different racing disciplines and match types including regular race events, time trial, overtake challenges and of course Drift competitions.

Codemasters are offering players four new cars to slide around corners in this new set of DLC: NOS Energy Nissan 370Z (Z34), Chevrolet "Tyler McQuarrie"

Camaro, Team Orange Mitsubishi Evo x and Daijiro Yoshihara Nissan 240sx (s13). Priced at £3.99 or 480 MS Points, this set is aimed squarely at those who like to tackle corners by shifting their rear to the side. ■

Halo 4: Champions Bundle

In August, 343 Industries will be releasing not one but three new content packs for *Halo 4*, all wrapped up in something which they're calling the Champions Bundle.
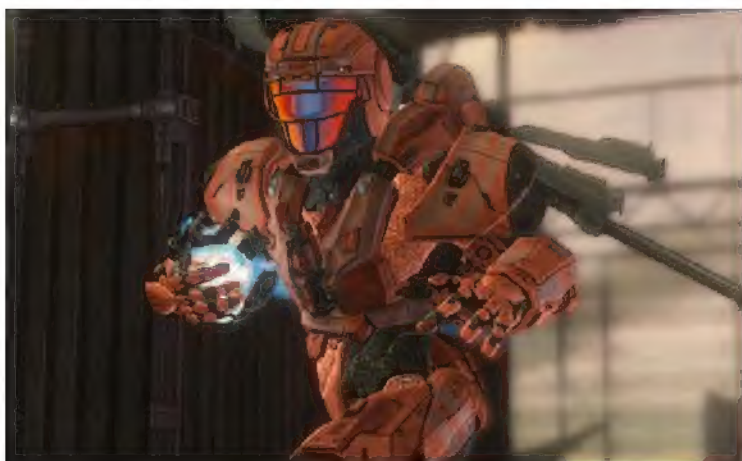
The set features three different packs which can be bought separately – Bullseye, Infinity Armour and Steel Skin – which together offer two new multiplayer maps, an American Football-themed armour set, a new gravball match type (think Grifball) called Ricochet, and Steampunk skins for UNSC, Covenant, and Forerunner weapons when used in multiplayer.

With *Halo 5* not expected to launch until 'Late 2014' at the soonest, and exclusively for Xbox One no less, we suspect these content drops for *Halo 4* will continue for a long time to come. ■

Just Cause 2: Crazy Civvies

In open-world craziness stakes, *Just Cause 2* is probably only second to *Saints Row: The Third*, but with the help of mods, Avalanche Studios' release might just push Volition's release for laugh out loud hilarity.

This award-winning mod from a member of the JustCause2Mods.com community dials up the humour with crazy civilians who drive at breakneck speeds across the island of Panau, paying little attention to stop signs, traffic lights or buses which block the thoroughfare. Military AI has also been tweaked so that they fire on speeding vehicles with ultimate prejudice, and pilots will randomly struggle to get their aircraft off the ground, with predictably chaotic results. Drive safe now! ■

F1 2012 Realism Mod

Just because *F1 2013* has just been announced that doesn't mean there isn't a garage-load of mods available for *F1 2012* to extend your play time. Despite a wealth of community-made content out there, including a full roster update bringing driver, livery and team changes in accordance with the official 2013 data, our favourite mod is undoubtedly the *F1 2012 Realism Mod*. This fantastic piece of content updates Codemasters Birmingham's already excellent racing sim with new options to please the most hardcore of Formula One fans. AI is more aggressive, race performance is tailored to represent actual data and mechanical failures take place at an increased rate of around half-a-dozen per race. Tyre degradation and race length is also able to be tailored and tweaked. ■
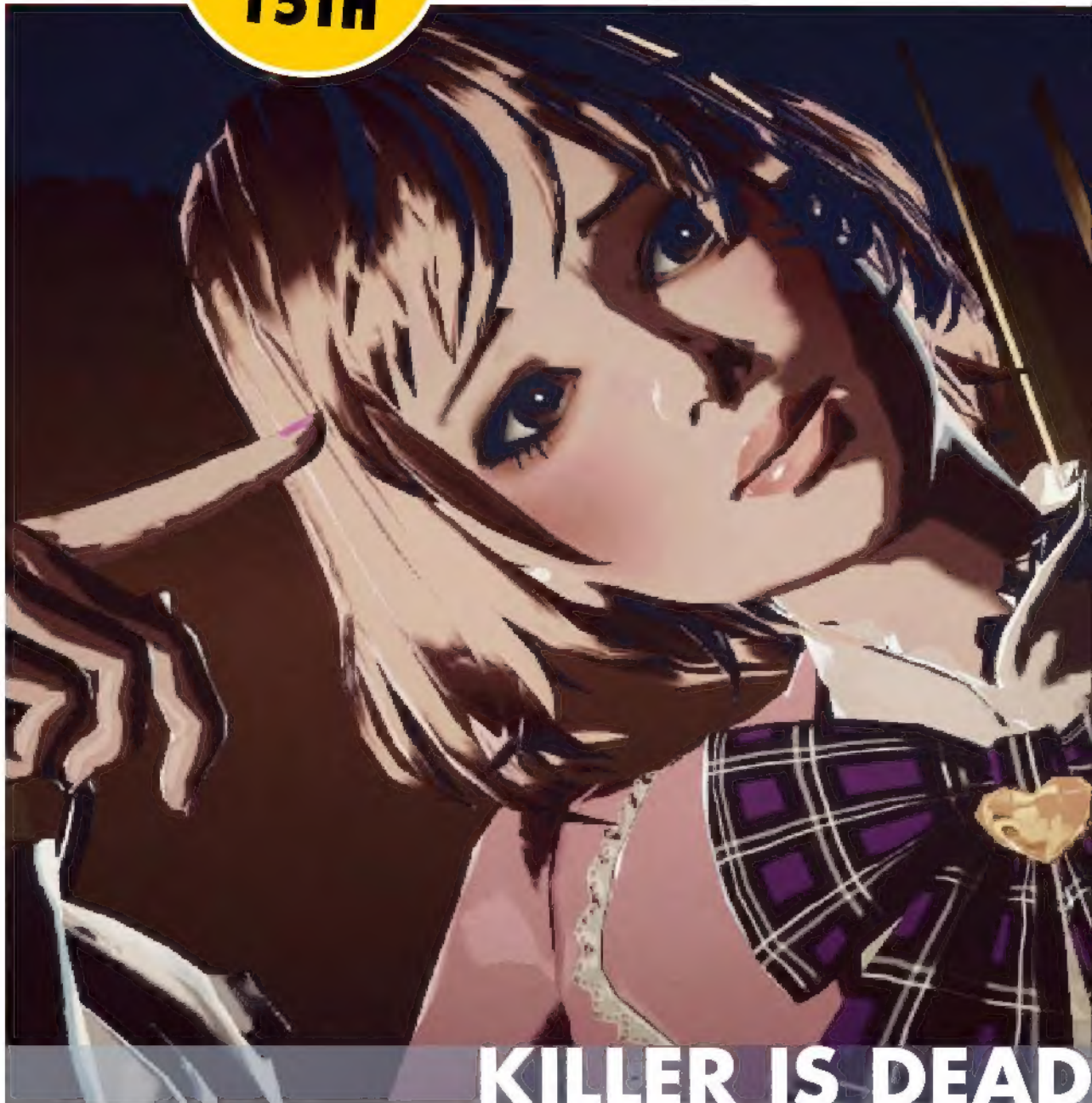
TOM CLANCY'S
SPLINTER CELL: BLACKLIST

THE BUREAU:
XCOM DECLASSIFIED

KILLER IS DEAD